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11 February 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR:

FROM :

SUBJECT : Berlin Task Force Meeting

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1. [] attended a Berlin Task Force meeting hastily convened on 10 February to consider the ramifications of the new East German travel restrictions, promulgated on 8 February. The meeting was chaired by Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Alfred Puhon. His report follows.

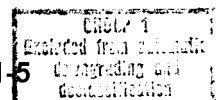
2. The general impression one received at the meeting was that the State Department representatives, with the exception of those from INR, are expecting a serious crunch in Berlin. They were disturbed by the ban on "working materials," and by the timing of the Pankow's announcement, reasoning that the long lead time the East Germans provided themselves was ominous in that they can begin harassing traffic three weeks before the Federal Assembly meets. Strangely enough, however, they seem to believe that the Soviets are going to play everything in low-key. East German harassment and Soviet non-involvement are not strictly mutually exclusive, but in past crises the Soviets have called the shots. We have no evidence that Moscow intends to surrender control to Pankow in matters affecting Berlin.

3. As usual, Martha Mautner of INR provided the intelligence briefing. Her assessment of the East German travel ban was very similar to that presented in the CIB published on the 10th. In discussing her briefing, members of the Office of German Affairs in the Department and Mr. Puhon in particular indicated that they were primarily bothered by the fact that the East Germans had banned the transport of "working materials" of the Federal Assembly as well as travel by members of the Assembly itself. Their reasoning is that this aspect of the new decree provides Pankow with the justification to search all West German vehicles travelling to

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State Dept. review completed

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Berlin, and thus the justification for slowing traffic to a standstill. (The East Germans, it should be pointed out, have other laws and decrees which have long provided them excuses to search vehicles and thus slow down traffic).

4. The remainder of the meeting was devoted primarily to discussing the Department's proposed reply to the Soviet note of 23 December 1968. (See attachment) Paragraphs 2A-2C had already been coordinated with the British and French, while paragraph 2D was added at the last moment. Arguments concerning certain aspects of 2D resulted in the minor changes noted. Paragraph 3 was dropped in its entirety because, it was decided, it was demeaning to the US to, in effect, plea with the Soviets not to cause trouble while the President was readying his trip to West Berlin.

5. Mr. Puhan instructed the Office of German Affairs to prepare a paper listing possible East German actions and the appropriate US and Allied responses. Finally, he asked all members of the BTF to be prepared to attend future meetings "at one-half hour's notice."

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OUTGOING TELEGRAM Department of State

INDICATE: ☐ COLLECT
CHARGE TO

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Classification

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Origin

ACTION: Amembassy BONN PRIORITY

INFO: USMission BERLIN PRIORITY
Amembassy LONDON
Amembassy MOSCOW
Amembassy PARIS
USMission NATO
CINCUSAREUR
CINCEUR
USELMLO

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STATE

SUBJ: East German Announcement on Travel to Berlin

REF: Bonn 1768

1. Department agrees with proposal to move up date of delivery in Moscow of Allied reply to Soviet protest on Bundesversammlung to Feb. 13 and to include oral presentation similar to language of draft press statement. As in case of tripartite reply, we believe copy this statement should also be left with Soviets.

2. Complete text of Allied oral reply, including proposed new language follows:

QTE: A. In its communication of December 23, 1968, the

2/10/69

EUR/GER: ARThompson:lpp

6465

Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by:

The Secretary

Clearances:

EUR/GER - Mr. Johnpoll

EUR/SOV - Mr. Dubs

BTF - Mr. Puhan

EUR - Mr. Leddy

EUR - Mr. Toon

S/S -

White House -

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~~XXXXXX~~ PAGE 2

To: Amembassy BONN

Date

Soviet Government has presented as a possible source of tension the convening in Berlin in March 1969 of the Federal Assembly which will elect the Federal President.

B. The (blank) Government wishes to point out that in the course of the past fifteen years such elections have taken place three times in Berlin without giving rise to any incident. Given these precedents and conscious of its own responsibilities in the city, the (blank) Government sees no reason why holding the Bundesversammlung once again in Berlin should give rise to any difficulties.

C. The (blank) Government fully agrees with the passage in the Soviet communication which states that any aggravation of the situation in Berlin, even if only of an intermittent character, is not desirable. The (blank) Government for its part has always taken care to maintain stability in Berlin, and deplores that on various occasions, notably in June 1968, actions initiated by the East German authorities have had the

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To: Amembassy BONN

opposite effect. It counts on the Soviet Government, in accordance with the commitments which bind it to the other three powers, to see to it in the future that new tension is avoided in Berlin, a city which as a whole remains subject to quadripartite status.

D. In this connection, the (blank) Government wishes to draw the attention of the Soviet Government to the East German announcement on February 8 of measures "prohibiting" travel through East German territory by delegates, staff and INNER QTE work materials END INNER QTE for the Federal Assembly to be held on March 5 in Berlin. The (blank) Government reminds the Soviet Government that it, and not East Germany, is responsible for assuring [free and unhindered access] of persons and goods to Berlin. Use of the Bundesversammlung as a pretext to impose measures designed to disturb the peaceful situation in Berlin, is contrary to efforts to reduce inter-

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To: Amembassy BONN

national tensions in the area. The (blank) Government calls upon the Soviet Government, to take appropriate steps to maintain normal access to and from Berlin. UNQTE.

3. { Department believes it would be useful for US rep in Moscow, after delivering formal statement, to take note of forthcoming Berlin visit of President Nixon, adding that it would be unfortunate if the Soviet Government permitted any disturbing acts.) *Dropped*

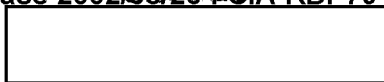
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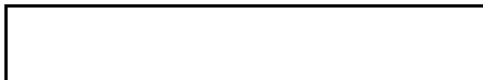
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classification approved by:

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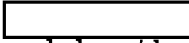
17 February 1969

MEMORANDUM TO:



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SUBJECT : Berlin Task Force Meeting

25X1A 1. Another Task Force meeting was convened at 1000 on 17 February.  who attended, reports as follows. It was chaired by the Deputy Director of the BTF, Alexander C. Johnpoll, who is Acting Director of the Office of German Affairs in the Department. The primary purpose of the meeting, he said, was to test whether BTF members could convene at an half-hour's notice. The members all received an "A".

2. In contrast to last week's meeting, the State representatives appeared relatively relaxed--perhaps because Al Puhon, the Acting Deputy Assistant of European Affairs, was not in attendance today. There was little discussion of the Soviet note to Bonn of 13 February, and no one suggested that a crunch on Berlin is imminent. Johnpoll announced, however, that because of the President's trip, the BTF would establish a "Night Watch" beginning 22 February. He stated that the "watch" would be staffed primarily by members of the Department, but implied that State might request outside assistance (an unprecedented idea for State).

3. It was revealed at the meeting that President Nixon was seeing Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin today (17 February), and that the first item on Nixon's agenda was Berlin. Little else was said, but one received the impression that the President would tell Dobrynin that the US fully supports the West German decision to hold the Federal Assembly meeting in Berlin. NPT is another topic on the President's agenda.

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4. Martha Mautner of INR again briefed. Her remarks indicated that her assessment of the Berlin situation remains in line with that of OCI.

5. After briefing, Mrs. Mautner suggested that the Department consider providing the press with a "backgrounder" concerning the legal relationship of Bonn's ties with Berlin, and the presence in East Germany of a surprisingly large number of ex-Nazis. (Pankow has displayed sensitivity to recent charges made by the western press that it shelters numerous ex-Nazis.) All who commented on this suggestion thought that it was a good idea. Johnpoll suggested that USIA prepare such a briefing, but the USIA representative pointed out that the Information Agency cannot contact US pressmen of Western press representatives in the US, and replied that State's press department would have to do it. At this, the State representatives' enthusiasm noticeably waned, and discussion of the topic ended with a remark, "Well, we shall see if McCloskey is willing to do it."

6. The meeting then discussed the note the West German government proposes to send to the Soviet Union in reply to Moscow's protest of 13 February. Representatives of the State's legal department voiced some minor objections to the text but everyone agreed that it basically was a good reply. (The representatives from the legal department suggested drafting another note to the Soviet Union, spelling out the legal position of the US concerning such matters as the Bundesversammlung. Johnpoll and other members of the Office of German Affairs vetoed this, however, stating they do not wish to engage the Soviets in a battle of legal niceties.)

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19 February 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Office of Current Intelligence
SUBJECT : State Department's Views on Berlin Questions

1. Comments made at recent meetings of the Berlin Task Force by various members of the State Department, including the Acting Director of the Office of German Affairs, Alexander Johnpoll, and Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, Alfred Puhon, suggest that the Department: (1) is convinced that the East Germans intend to harass West German access to Berlin and probably the city itself; (2) is reconciled to the idea that the US can do little to prevent this; and (3) does not intend to engage the Soviets in a polemical exchange concerning the East German measures.

2. Based on statements made by State representatives at the Task Force meetings and private conversations with some Department officers, one is led to assume that the US will do nothing unless the East Germans actions seriously affect US interests. The East Germans presumably could block West German access for long periods of time, and probably could also interfere with US access on a temporary and limited basis without risking US retaliatory measures. One must assume that the Soviets know the US position, and must assume further that they have told the East Germans just how far they can go. East German harassment was to be expected at the time of the West German Federal Assembly meeting, but the failure of the US to do anything more than remind the Soviets in vague terms that East German harassment will be regarded unfavorably by the US probably ensures that Pankow will harass Berlin.

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19 February 1969

MEMORANDUM TO:

FROM :

SUBJECT :



Berlin Task Force Meeting

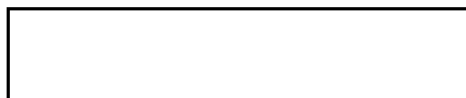
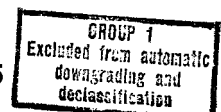
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1. Another Task Force meeting, the third in three working days, was held on 18 February. It was chaired again by Alexander Johnpoll, the deputy director of the BTF and Acting Director of the Office of German Affairs at State.

2. The Task Force was convened to "consider" the merits of recommending that the number of Allied military convoys to Berlin be increased during the period between 27 February and 7 March. According to Johnpoll, someone in the White House--he did not know who--had expressed interest in this idea on 17 February. The State Department, therefore, had prepared a draft message which would be sent to the Bonn Group should the White House explicitly request that the Department take such action. Johnpoll indicated that if the White House does not expressly request action, the Department will do nothing more with the idea.

3. The draft message recommends that the US Embassy in Bonn consult the other members of the Bonn Group and recommend that the number of convoys be increased. The exact number and timing of their dispatch would be left to the Allied commandants. The message does recommend that the number of vehicles in each convoy be limited so that advance notification of the convoys' travel would not have to be given to the Soviets. Johnpoll indicated that if the White House wants more convoys, the US is prepared to act unilaterally, but

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he stressed the desirability of having the British and French participate.

4. During the short and rather pro forma discussion period which followed Johnpoll's reading of the draft message, he stated that the purpose in sending more Allied convoys to Berlin would be to demonstrate that the Allies are concerned about Berlin and do not intend to have their rights violated. When it was pointed out that Allied rights, particularly access rights, do not seem to be in question at this moment, and that increasing the number of Allied convoys would only draw attention to the fact that West German access was being curtailed, Johnpoll replied that anything the Allies do to demonstrate their interest in Berlin is good for the city. He suggested that the Soviets might even rein in the East Germans as a result of such Allied action. One would presume, however, that if State believed that this type of Allied action would have any real effect, it would not await a specific order from the White House before proposing the convoy idea. Johnpoll probably summed up State's actual position on the question of German access rights to Berlin, when he stated that "there is really very little we can do if the East Germans harass the West Germans."

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25 February 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence
SUBJECT : Berlin Task Force

1. The Berlin Task Force is an interdepartmental committee responsible for coordination of US contingency planning on Berlin and for operational management on the US side during Berlin crisis periods. Representatives from CIA, the National Security Council, USIA, the Department of Commerce, the Federal Aviation Agency, the Department of Defense, and the State Department attend meetings. The BTF is staffed permanently by members of the State Department's Office of German Affairs. The BTF is currently chaired by Mr. Alfred Puhon, the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. The Deputy Chairman is Mr. Alexander Johnpoll, Acting Director of the Office of German Affairs. (Enclosed as an annex is a list of all members of the BTF.)

2. The Task Force was established in July 1961 at the direct request of President Kennedy, but apparently has never been given a formal charter or specific terms of reference. It met on a weekly basis until late in September 1965, then biweekly until 17 February 1966, then on a monthly basis until February 1967. Since the latter date, it has met only as needed, this decision being taken by the chairman. Recently, there have been several meetings to discuss the East German/Soviet actions connected with the forthcoming meeting in West Berlin of the Federal Assembly.

3. Representatives from both DDP and DDI attend the meetings. The DDI representative apparently first began attending on a regular basis in late 1963. The then Chief

designated a member [redacted] to attend the BTF meetings, and since that date EED has sent a representative to each of the meetings. Unless nothing at all of interest occurs, he writes a memorandum, addressed to the Chief [redacted] summarizing the activity of the BTF meeting.

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25 Feb 69

4. In practice, the BTF is a State Department-run show. An intelligence briefing is provided by INR, and then the other State representatives usually comment on the briefing, and present the Department's views on Berlin-related matters. Because it is almost always policy-oriented issues which are discussed, both CIA representatives usually merely observe the discussions or provide intelligence information or analyses which relate to the topics discussed.

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